

TRUST The DOC



Edition 119: 31st August 2026



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THE HOTTEST NEWS FROM THE GRASSROOTS SCENE:

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INTRODUCTION:

August is always one of our quieter months with all of it falling within the Fresh on the Net summer hiatus and a lot of people away. That did not stop a good amount of new music pouring into the TTD in-box for this journal and the corresponding radio show. So we have still reviewed a cool 64 tracks in this edition.

Thanks then to all the pluggers, PR outlets, labels, managers and artists who submit their or their clients' music to us. It is not physically possible to play all the tracks we receive on the show but we play as many as we can fit in and we write about as many as we can in these pages too. August's FOTN hiatus has meant more than usual have been included on the show and reviewed in this edition.

Unusually, we have also made a point of namechecking the pluggers and PR folks who have brought us tracks to review as we know how little they get mentioned by other media. As previously pointed out, FOTN being closed meant we could cover more of their tracks so this was the ideal edition to do it in.

Talking of FOTN, our youngest moderator, the talented teenage

singer-songwriter Mia Wilks takes us through her favourite collaborations. Read her words in Part 3.

We also have Sherry's review of the new album by Olivia Miceli who Sherry has been championing for some time both in this journal and via Fresh on the Net. Sherry also takes us through the challenging process of successfully applying for the Global Talent Visa while Neil talks about the early launch of the government's Music Growth Package and his role in Lewisham North Labour Party's roundtable on arts funding. He also looks back at the influence of the shortlived but brilliant Ravishing Beauties.

In terms of news, it's been a busy and exciting month for [The] Music Of Sound and we have been so pleased to have had the amazing Jade Perry of Memphis Music Management & PR leading our media promotion campaign. See the item in Part 1 about how that has been going.

**NEIL MARCH & SHERRY
SAHAYARAJ**

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PART ONE: NEWS AND INFORMATION: EDITION 119

[THE] MUSIC OF SOUND: SHIMMER AND SHINE !!!!



(Pics by Del Owusu)

August has been an exciting month for [\[The\] Music Of Sound](#) following the release of our new single ***Shimmer*** by **Monochrome Motif Records**. We kicked off the month with the filming of the [video](#) under the direction of our awesome friend and fellow musician **Del Owusu**. Editing was done by **Sherin** (Sherry) with help from **Aniya**. We had a blast filming around Millennium Bridge.

The decision to bring in the amazing **Jade Perry** of [Memphia Management & PR](#) to handle the media promotion for ***Shimmer*** has proved to be an inspired one. Not

only has Jade worked extremely hard and kept us informed daily but she has enabled us to be selected by **RTE**, Ireland's national broadcaster, for their [Behind The Music](#) feature and to land reviews in [Fame Magazine](#); [Pop Journal](#); [Music News Monthly](#); [The Whole Kameese](#); [1st3 Magazine](#); [Occhi Magazine](#); [Anghami](#) and [Afternoiz](#) plus a podcast interview, on YouTube, with [Post Burnout](#) and lovely reviews from our eloquent writer friends **Del Owusu** in [Platinum Mind](#) and **Tony Hardy** in [Fifty3Fridays](#), both of whom describe our music so well and understand our journey.

Then there has been airplay on **RTE (2FM)**; **The Fox's Den (Vixen FM)**; **Good Music Radio**; **IndieCentric (Charlie Mason Radio)**; **The Tuesday Club (with Chris & Jamie)** on **BGFM Radio (Wales)**; **Space Is The Place Radio (Cando FM)**, **Phonic FM**, **Indiephonic** etc.

Our friend **Michelle Ward (Eat My Brunch, Phoenix FM)** has once again given us an amazing amount of daytime play. **Del** has also given us fantastic support, making ***Shimmer*** his Track of the Day on **Platinum Mind** (where, as already mentioned, he has also reviewed the single) and playing us on the **Songbird Sessions** on **Exile FM**.

We had some lovely feedback from listeners to the [Trust The Doc Radio](#) show too, leading to an eloquent and informative review by the amazing **Tony Hardy** in **Fifty3Fridays** (also mentioned above) and enlightening feedback from fellow grassroots musicians and supporters. The super talented **Nick Woodgate** (aka **The Jojo Man Band**) compared it to Tamla Motown which was a great

compliment. Thanks to Nick, who has made this comparison a few times about our tracks, we have started citing Tamla Motown as an influence in our press materials.

Meanwhile our talented and supportive friend **Serge Wenus** playlisted ***Shimmer*** on release day which set things in motion and, thanks to **Emiel Van Bruggen** at **YouGrow Promo**, we were playlisted by 7 of their curators too, all of which has led to over 4,000 streams so far and a continuing momentum. Once again we are particularly pleased by the levels of engagement with 10% of listeners saving the track to personalised playlists and/or libraries. We are, as always, hugely grateful to **Serge** whose continuous support is keeping so many of our singles on the Spotify listeners' radar.

Engagement with the video has seen the [Trust The Doc TV](#) channel hit 4.4K subscribers (+ a record 23K views for the video). There have been great comments posted by viewers too. So all in all, our most successful and impactful release campaign to date.



Stills from the video of ***Shimmer*** by [The] Music Of Sound (L-R: Neil, Sherin, Aniya, Ellie)

THE PORTSMOUTH HUB: BUSY SUMMER SCHEDULE



It may be holiday season for some but there is no sign of that at Mayfield Records where they are ensuring Arts Council England's and The National Lottery's money is being put to the greatest possible use as they bring so much exciting talent into their beautiful studio and get the results out on digital platforms worldwide.

Following late July releases by Joe Johnson and Mary Red (with the

Mayfield Records House Band) and August releases by Brooke Star and Hannah Reem, all of which were reviewed in Ed. 118 and have been played on the Trust The Doc Radio show, there have been singles by the Mayfield Records House Band (ft Mary Red) and Jodie Vinall (reviewed in this edition), both featured by **BBC Introducing**, plus a superb interview on local radio with Dom who set out the project's plans for the coming months.

TRUST THE DOC RADIO: UPDATE

The **Trust The Doc Radio** show goes out every Saturday evening at 5PM BST on [Exile FM](#). It is presented by Neil and consists of two hours in which the primary content is current music, mostly by grassroots artists but always including some of the best current tracks by more well-known artists too.

In between, there is the popular ***What's The Word*** feature where listeners try to guess the title of the track Neil has chosen from the three clues (all also tracks) provided and additional hints that are given as the show develops. And there is a **Show Closer** Poll based on a theme which might be the anniversary of a classic album, the UK Top 5 albums or singles from 30, 40 or 50 years ago that week or a theme that song titles and artist names relate to. August saw a poll looking back 60 years to the UK singles chart at the

beginning of August 1966 (before any of our times!). We also had a poll celebrating the Liverpool band **China Crisis** with 8 of their singles to choose from (won by **Black Man Ray**) and one for **En Vogue** (won by **My Lovin' ...**). As I write, **The Beat** are up for the poll this weekend with 9 tracks to pick from.

The show always has live threads running on X/Twitter and BlueSky where listeners comment on the music, chat about a variety of topics, share pics of their food and all sorts of other things plus the shoutbox is there for those who prefer to send messages just to be read out on air. The audience is an incredible community that includes a lot of popular independent artists and supporters of grassroots music, many of whom will be familiar to regular readers of Trust The Doc. If you miss the live, interactive show, you can catch the podcast for 7 days [here](#).



PART TWO: REVIEWS OF NEW MUSIC: ED 119

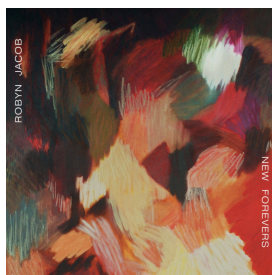
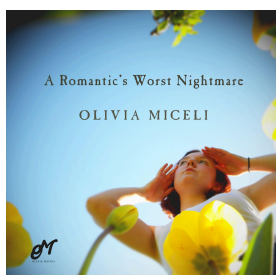
SHOWING SOME LOVE FOR ALL THE HARD WORKING INDIE PLUGGING & PR FOLKS

With Fresh On The Net on a hiatus throughout August, we have been more reliant than usual on the many hard working independent plugging and PR people who bring us so many new releases to play on the radio show and write about here. So, for once, in this issue, we will be name checking as many of them as possible in relation to the tracks they have submitted on behalf of the artists and labels they represent.

So it's a case of stand up **Jade Perry** (**Memphia Music Management & PR**); **Shauna McLarnon** (**Shameless PR**), **Lee**

Jackson (**Wall Of Sound PR**), **Danny Watson** (**Danny Watson Radio**), **Gary Levermore** (**Red Sand PR**), **Jo Lowes** (**Pufferfish Press**), **Gary Hancock** (**Big G PR**), **Angie Lemon** (**Angie Lemon PR**), **Jack Cody & Kip Kouri** (**Tell All Your Friends PR**), **Amelia Fletcher** (**Skep Wax**), **Wells Hartman** (**Wells Hartman**), **Ed Townend** (**Elt Music UK**), **Monika Agorelius** (**Close Up PR**) and all the team (**Olivia, Carmelia, Mikey, James**) at **Plugged In PR**. All of you bring us so much good music and most months we can only play and review a fraction of it due to the volume of submissions.

ALBUMS & EPs



Stoke-on-Trent based artist [Olivia Miceli](#) has been a favourite of TTD for a while and especially of **Sherry** who has championed her music. Here Sherry reviews Olivia's new album ***A Romantic's Worst Nightmare***. The album was released on 25th August.

Also in this section, **Neil** reviews an extraordinary contemporary classical and sound art work by the exciting Canadian composer [Robyn Jacobs](#). Over to Sherry.

This is actually my first ever album review, so I am really excited to be

writing this one. I discovered Olivia Miceli's music through Fresh on the Net and have been following her music since then. I have really enjoyed listening to her songs, so getting the opportunity to review her upcoming new album, ***A Romantic's Worst Nightmare***, feels quite special to me. The album takes us through the different sides of being a romantic; having a crush, getting excited about someone, feeling jealous, comparing yourself to others, dealing with disappointment and still holding on to someone even when you know you probably should let go. What I also enjoyed is that the album does not stay in one mood. There are tracks that are fun, energetic and incredibly catchy, while others are softer, darker and much more emotional. So, as my first album review, I am really excited to take you through *A Romantic's Worst Nightmare* track by track and share what stood out to me, what I connected with and the moments that made me want to press replay.

Track 1 - Dating App

Dating App opens the album with a soft and pleasant ballad that immediately gives us a sense of what is to come. Olivia's vocals are the highlight here, soulful, warm and full of emotion, making the song feel personal and honest. She

delivers the lyrics naturally without overdoing the emotion, which makes the feeling of longing come through beautifully. As an opening track, it is a gentle introduction to the album's themes of love, hope and uncertainty.

Track 2 - Click

Click brings a more lively and catchy feel to the album. It feels like the kind of track you would play while getting ready to go out, with a light and happy energy that makes you want to move along with it. The melody is easy to remember, and Olivia's vocals add a lovely warmth to the song. What I like about *Click* is that it feels fun on the surface, but there is still an emotional side underneath it. Olivia's voice keeps that personal feeling throughout, making the song feel natural rather than overproduced. It is an easy song to enjoy and one that keeps the album moving nicely after the softer opening of "Dating App".

Track 3 - Everybody Wants Him

Everybody Wants Him feels like an indie-pop anthem for those moments when you are disappointed but still want to sing your heart out. The track has a really energetic and playful feel to it, which makes the story behind it even more fun. Instead of making

the disappointment feel heavy, Olivia turns it into something you can actually enjoy and sing along to. Her vocals work really well with the energy of the track. There is a sense of excitement in the way she delivers the song, while still keeping that feeling of having a crush and knowing that everyone else seems to want the same person. It is the kind of song you could put on when you are getting ready with your friends, slightly annoyed about the situation, but laughing about it at the same time. The catchy indie-pop sound makes *Everybody Wants Him* feel like one of those songs that could easily become an anthem for anyone who has ever liked someone who seems to be everybody's favourite.

Track 4 - Darling He Doesn't Care

Darling He Doesn't Care is where the album starts to feel a little more direct and fearless. It has that feeling of talking to your friend after they have made the same mistake with a guy for the tenth time you already know the truth, but they are still hoping he will change. The lyrics are very straightforward, almost like a conversation, which makes the song easy to connect with. The lyrics are basically calling someone out and saying, "wake up, he is not giving you what you think he is," but the track itself has a fun,

upbeat energy. It feels almost like a song you would sing with your friends after a bad date, turning the disappointment into something funny and empowering. Rather than making the song feel overly dramatic, she keeps it playful, which gives it more personality. The repeated sections also give it a strong pop structure and make the track feel easy to sing along to. "He Doesn't Care" feels like one of those tracks where the listener can have a laugh about a disappointing situation while also recognising the reality behind it.

Track 5 - Friday the 13th

Friday the 13th takes the idea of bad luck and turns it into a story of heartbreak. Olivia compares the situation to the unlucky day, as she watches the person she likes become happier because of someone else. There is something quite painful about hearing that he has been seeing another girl every night, especially when she can see how happy he is and how his eyes light up when he talks about her. The sadness feels even stronger because there is still a part of her that wants him to love her back, even though she knows she might be better off without him. I really like the way Olivia sings this because the emotion feels very natural. Her vocals have a softness to them, but you can still hear the

disappointment underneath. For me, *Friday the 13th* feels like the soundtrack to that moment when you realise you have been unlucky in love, not because you did something wrong, but simply because the person you wanted chose someone else.

Track 6 - Lydia said

Lydia Said is probably one of my favourite tracks on the album. It feels very personal, almost like reading someone's private thoughts that were never meant to be shared. There is something about the songwriting that reminds me a little of Olivia Rodrigo. Not because it sounds exactly the same, but because it has that very honest way of telling a complicated love story in a simple and relatable way. You can picture the whole situation as the song goes on, writing letters, checking the time, overthinking at night and wondering what could have happened if things had been different. I really love the background vocals in this track. They add so much depth and emotion, especially as the song develops. They make the track feel bigger without taking away from the intimacy of the lead vocal. What makes *Lydia Said* special for me is the way it builds rather than giving everything away at the beginning. It feels like a story

unfolding in front of you, with each section revealing a little more about how much she actually feels for this person. For me, this is one of the tracks where Olivia's storytelling really shines, and it is definitely a song I would come back to.

Track 7 - Achilles Heart

Achilles Heart brings a much darker and more painful feeling to the album. After the more playful and direct tracks earlier on, this song feels like a change in mood. It has a colder, heavier atmosphere. I also found the songwriting here more poetic compared to some of the earlier tracks. Instead of telling the story in such a straightforward way, Olivia leaves more room for the listener to feel and interpret what she is going through. The words feel more like thoughts and emotions being put into music rather than simply explaining what happened. Olivia's vocals are especially strong on this track. You can hear the pain in her voice, but she never overdoes it. Her delivery feels emotional and honest, which makes the song feel very personal. The combination of the poetic lyrics, darker mood and emotional vocal performance makes this track stand out from the more upbeat songs that came before it.

Track 8 - That Girl

That Girl brings the energy back up again and is definitely one of the catchier tracks on the album. It has a very playful and confident feel, but there is also a deeper message underneath the fun sound. What really stayed with me is the chorus. The repeated “that girl” hook is very catchy and gets stuck in your head quite easily. It has that feeling where you find yourself singing along without even realising it. Olivia delivers it with so much energy that the track feels almost like an anthem. She talks about the “perfect girl” image in a way that feels playful rather than turning it into a serious lecture. There is a bit of sarcasm in the way the lyrics describe everyone trying to fit into the same image, which makes the message even more interesting.

Overall, *A Romantic’s Worst Nightmare* feels like a very honest look at what it is like to be a romantic in a world where relationships can be confusing, complicated and sometimes completely one-sided. What I enjoyed most is the way Olivia takes these very normal feelings; having a crush, disappointment, comparison and wanting someone who may never feel the same and turns them into songs that are easy to connect with. There is a good

balance across the album. You have the fun and catchy moments like *Everybody Wants Him* and *Bad Girl*, but then you also have the more emotional and personal songs like *Friday the 13th* and *Lydia Said*. That variety keeps the album interesting and makes it feel like a journey rather than a collection of songs about the same subject. This album feels like Olivia being open about the good, bad and slightly embarrassing sides of being a hopeless romantic. It is fun, emotional, sometimes painful and very relatable and I think that is exactly what makes *A Romantic’s Worst Nightmare* worth spending some time with.

Vancouver, Canada is home to composer, pianist and singer [Robyn Jacobs](#) who has a new album called *New Forevers* on which she collaborates with a variety of musicians. The music is instantly intriguing. On *Portals In the Offing*, her harmonic and rhythmic style is modal and a little jazz-infused with staccato chords interspersed by unison arpeggios while crystal-like percussion plays prominently alongside the piano. The combining of both timbres and stylistic contrasts is very striking from the outset and, as the rhythmic configurations become more complex and bring metric modulation into play, it becomes all the more unpredictable. There are

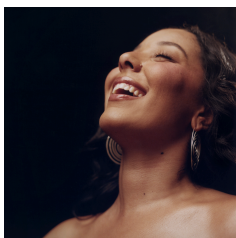
more mellow moments too but the chord repetition and arpeggio sweeps are a constant and the harmonic extensions are beautifully constructed.

The remaining pieces show a great many sides of her creativity. **Portals II: The Verge** is stunning. As she uses long tones both to move subtly in and out of focus and to create almost ear-piercing tones, it becomes all the more gripping. Suddenly we are in post-Spectral territory, shades of Radulescu and Avram even. **New Forevers** itself has some hypnotic chanting while the rigour of the tuned and untuned percussion and the rhythms they evoke have echoes of Boulez. It is once again an intriguingly unusual and beautifully configured piece. **Pith** focuses on the possibilities of tuned percussion in a crystal-like exploration that again is compelling listening. **Collective Ungraspable** takes the percussion

and ambience into more volatile waters.

It ends with **Transference And Zoosemiotics**, a 14 minute piece that begins with some mind-spinning percussion trills and rhythmic counterpoint. This piece uses space extremely well as it introduces a variety of contrasting sub-sections, sometimes entirely percussive, other times based on deep enigmatic chords. The sense, as the percussion instruments interact in jagged rhythms over the final stretch, is that this is a lot more ordered and technique-based than it may appear and the almost tranquility it finally achieves is a very clever way to end a work that is so original, so packed with contrasting ideas and so inspiring in its experimental, unrestricted intentions. Robyn Jacobs may be a new name to me but she has just become one of my favourite contemporary composers.

POP NOODLES



Brought to us by the amazing James Passmore at Plugged In PR, if you had any doubts about the growing popularity of [Grace](#)

[Carter](#), you only need look at the fact that we are reviewing her new single **Party Baby** 3 days after release day and it already has over

17,000 streams on Spotify alone. This is more straight ahead Pop than her last release, medium fast tempo, energetic beat and instrumental backdrop while the

hook is so persistent, you have nowhere to hide. Add Grace's fine and agile vocals and this one wins hands down.

ALT ROCK & INDIE



From Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, brought to us by the awesome Shauna McLarnon of Shameless PR, [Low Sunday](#) have a single called ***You're So Wired***. It is taken from their *Ghost Machine* EP. The sound here sits somewhere between Post-Psych and Shoegaze, like Jesus And Mary Chain in a jam with Ride while Dinosaur Jnr lurk in the shadows. The guitars and bass thunder over driving drum beats while a little melodic figure could be a synth or a guitar. The deep echoing vocal rising up an octave has an air of Ian McCullough about it. All in all, it is a striking blend of sounds and is cleverly produced with an agreeably metallic edge.

Brought to us by tireless campaigner Danny Watson Radio, Manchester's [Stella Wingfield](#)'s debut single is ***Shut Up & Sit Down***. Built around a syncopated beat and descending chord pattern, it has an early nineties vibe with the big drum sound and

the harmonised vocals but then it also has a little of Jane Weaver about it. The increasingly multi-tracked vocals help to build the intensity of the track and the repeating of the hook with lyrical variations is a clever touch that draws us in. Strong debut.

The amazing Jade Perry at Memphis Management & PR brings us another track by Bath's [Young Martyrs](#). ***Only You*** follows hot on the heels of several other singles including *Seventeen* and *Sugar On My Tongue*. It has a passionate male vocal from the outset, initially accompanied by strummed guitar chords, soon fortified by thumping beat and robust bass. This feels epic and tailor-made for the big festival stage. The last line - Said you were willing to die for this/Are you willing to live? - is a great way to end a song of this kind. Dynamic, powerful and very catchy.

Brought to us by the excellent Lee Jackson at Wall Of Sound PR, Croydon's [Bugeye](#) return with ***This Is What I Want***. An agreeably edgy bass sound kicks things off and soon we get trademark semi-conversational lyrical flow but set within a hooky song that is driven along by the band's energy and chemistry with an underlying funkiness that is a feature of their work. The lyrics deal sardonically with stereotypes and entrenched attitudes. Punchy, positive and power-driven.

Allinson is [Shy Reptiles](#) and appears to have enlisted the help of a female singer to share vocal duties on ***So Real***. Built around a guitar figure that jumps an octave and descends via the fifth and fourth of the scale, this is in an energetic mid-tempo groove and has a bit of an early nineties indie feel to it. The tune is reinforced as the track develops and the female voice becomes more prominent. The hook stays with you long after it ends.

Brought to us by hard working Jo Lowes of Pufferfish Press, **Dave**



Brought to us by the energetic Kip Kouri of Tell All Your Friends PR, Los Angeles based [Drag Talk](#) have a single called ***Pony Up***. This is an intriguing hybrid of influences that may or may not include Paisley Punk Psych (think The Rain Parade), early nineties Indie and elements of Dream Pop. It swirls around a persistent beat with a mesh of intertwined instrumental ideas, creating an otherworldly quality that is reinforced by the effect on the male vocals which are melodic and have a yearning quality. All works really well.

In the press release for [Railcard](#)'s new single ***Unstable Neighbour***, Skep Wax's eloquent Amelia Fletcher explains that the band is something of an indie supergroup with former members of Dolly Mixture and a current member of Heavenly. This has a fresh feel but also recalls early eighties indie with female and male vocals that remind me of the likes of Delta 5, Mo-Dettes and The Raincoats. There the comparison ends though. The style here is much more modern, shades of 86TVs in a jam

with Cate Le Bon or something like that! Anyway, enough with the comparisons. This is breezy but energetic Indie Pop with cleverly contrasting vocals, cool harmonies and plenty of nuances to hold your interest alongside a catchy hook or three. It is also a taster for their forthcoming album *Two Steps At A Time* which is out on 18th September.

Hard working Wells Hartman delivers the new single by New Yorker [Leah Sinclair](#). **Lock & Key**, the title track of an EP, has a soft toned feel to the vocals which have echoes of Liz Fraser in a mash with Phoebe Bridgers and a melancholy air about the tune and how her voice weaves an agile path around strummed guitars and rich textures. The yearning, expressive performance and appealing melody suck you in and play on your emotions.

Cool campaigner Jack Cody of Tell All Your Friends PR brings New Yorker **Eddie Gore** aka [Dazies](#) and the single **Get Lost** from an album due for October release. Loud, punchy drums drive this along while the guitar is edgy and slices away at us, accompanying Eddie's Lou Reed meets Kurt Vile vocal style in an enjoyable energetic piece of Punk Pop with Psych leanings. Nicely done.

Fresh from their recent tour supporting Franz Ferdinand, [The Great Leslie](#) return with **Sindre**. In a sense, this is the definition of Funk Rock in as much as the male vocal is big, almost operatic in scale and takes us back to the days of Ian Gillan and the likes but the track also has a funky feel and the instrumental interplay between the band members gives the track extra momentum to match the epic nature of the tune.



Brought to us by the ever-dependable Lee Jackson of Wall Of Sound PR, Manchester's 'Alt Rock newcomers' [Midnight Swim](#) have a track called **Don't Wanna Talk About It**. This has shades of mid-80s Post-Punk mixing with

more contemporary Punk influences. The male vocal is more shouty than sung most of the time, emphasising the intensity and intention behind the song while the guitars are agreeably edgy and fuzzy, playing melodic riffs over

solid bass and live sounding drums. It has a great energy and will wake you up out of your afternoon slumber or whatever position you might be drifting off into! Some explosive drumming in the middle and then later a cool bass riff add additional dimensions and the constant reconfiguring of the parts keeps it all moving along with interest and a bit of sparkle including the unison vocals singing the hook over the final stretch leading to a great finish.

Also from Lee and Wall Of Sound PR come [Johnny Foreigner](#). The quartet from Birmingham comment, perhaps a little wryly, on the Brutalist postwar architecture of their City on ***The Concrete Collar***. The contrast in female and male voices is immediately of interest as they pick up the fast pace with busy bass and drums and guitars that are both melodic and punchy. There are clever switches between full and half time, helping to emphasise the catchiness of the hook. The song bristles with positive energy and keeps us engaged throughout.

TTD friend and royalty **Nick Woodgate** aka [The Jojo Man Band](#) has re-released the single ***Amazing*** which was originally out in early 2024. It gives us an opportunity to once again hear the clever ascending and descending

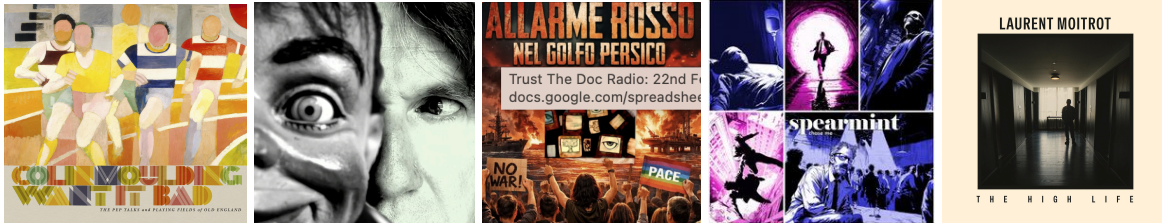
harmonised scales on the guitars and Nick's seemingly effortless ability to come out with memorable, infectious melodies. The half time beat somehow seems to elongate the hook and provide the perfect foundation for some sumptuous instrumental play too. Another demonstration of Nick's considerable songwriting and arranging skills. (See review for *She* further on in this section).

The inimitable **Dave King** aka [Gurry Wurry](#) has just landed a rave review for his new album in Clash Mag among a host of media that have embraced his work. Here we have the single ***Television Loveseat***. It might be exaggerating to call it a departure from recent tracks but it certainly shows another side of Dave's creativity with choppy guitars and colourful instrumental swirl accompanying an insistent melody that could almost be Ian Broudie in a jam with Gaz Coombes while Tamla Motown music plays in the next room. It is certainly refreshingly individual, calling upon influences from a variety of sources to create something individual, sophisticated and catchy too.

Amsterdam (in Netherlands just in case you weren't sure!) band [The Dark Wave](#) have a track called ***Alone***. The long intro is pretty with

reverberating guitar playing a figure over robust bass and drums. Eventually a male vocal joins the party and the vibe is a little Danse Society meets Talk Talk while early

Simple Minds lurk in the shadows. Dramatic and yearning vocals but calm, late night musical backdrop. It makes for an engaging contrast.



Okay, so I know he's not a 'grassroots artist' but [Colin Moulding](#) is the legendary Bass Guitarist with Post-Punk Art Pop giants **XTC** where he was unquestionably Andy Partridge's right hand man and sang lead on some key tracks including the somewhat prophetic *Making Plans For Nigel*. Now Colin has a new EP coming out called ***Burning Shed*** which you can preorder using the above link and from it the amazing Shauna McLarnon of Shameless PR has brought us the single ***Want It Bad (The Pep Talks And Playing Fields Of Old England)***. We rarely, if ever, use clichés like quintessentially English but, in the proper sense, that is what this is. Colin sings enigmatically about an idea we should be uniting behind without really saying what it is! This is set to warm keyboard chords and an increasingly harmonised vocal melody, eventually including call and response while the beat shuffles unobtrusively away and the bass is busy and adds its own staccato figure. Pipe-like themes

add to the sense of quasi-folksy Englishness and it fades gradually into the distance as if Colin himself is wandering off down that playing field. Agreeably tuneful and calming without ever revealing what it is that we apparently have to 'want so bad'! Perhaps the EP will be more explicit on this subject.

Brought to us by the excellent Gary Levermore at Red Sand PR and released by our old label Dimple Discs, [Duncan Maitland](#) brings us ***Dummy***. Duncan has an impressive past as a guitarist and singer, leading and providing hits for Irish band Picturehouse and working with a variety of other interesting names including Andy Partridge (thus continuing the XTC connection from the Colin Moulding review!) and our former label mate Ger Eaton. *Dummy* has a very sixties vibe with a chromatic melody that recalls a well-known track but one we are struggling to pinpoint. He places this explicitly retro influence with more contemporary production and

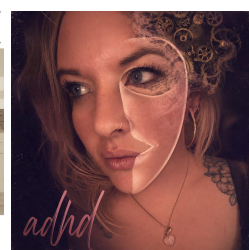
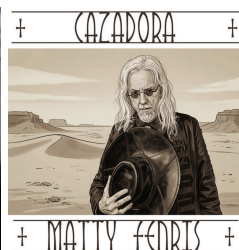
instrumental sounds though and makes it work as a piece of alternative Pop-Rock.

Led by **Nunzio Ciccone**, the Italian Electronic Rock band **Fiori Del Male** bring us *Allarme Rosso nel Golfo Persico*. It is an unusual hybrid of traditional Heavy Metal, Electronica and Prog with electronic sequences pumping away alongside live drums and classic metal guitar riffs and correspondingly dramatic sem-falsetto male vocals while the counter melodies are more like synthy Prog. It is not the kind of track we often review but it has something unique about it that gives it a freshness worth noting.

Spearmint, also brought to us by the prolific and always reliable Danny Watson, are on a roll at the moment and hit us with another single in *Not OK*. Interspersed with conversations about lockdown, local fires and discussions about reluctant to leave the house, this is a chirpy Indie Pop track with an

air of familiarity about the melody built on a IV - V - IIIm - VIm chord pattern (the *Fool If You Think It's Over* bridge and chorus sequence among many others) and lyrics about mental health and exhaustion that are perhaps all the more clever for the cheery, uptempo backdrop they are presented within.

French singer-songwriter **Laurent Moitrot** comes to us courtesy of the amazing Shauna McLarnon of Shameless PR. This is truly quirky Alternative Punk Pop. It begins like a hybrid of Sade's *Diamond Nights* and Devo's *Girl U Want* (albeit in a less quick tempo) but then brings to mind Kurt Vile in a jam with Beck as he sets out the story of one man's day, starting with his dog and then fleeing a potential killer! In the meantime, the guitar riffs away with a subtly bluesy edge and the punchy backdrop provides the foundation for an entertaining, unusual track that will keep you hooked.



Brought to us by **Russell Cottier** of the band, **Pete & The Lovehearts** have an EP out called *I've Been Thinkin'* from which the title track

has found its way onto our radio show. This is intriguing because it is based on a 12-bar, something that was such a part of music when I

was first playing in bands as a young teenager. The driving guitars and gritty vocals remind me of George Thorogood & The Destroyers in a jam with The Inmates while Steve Gibbons Band lurk in the shadows. No frills, energetic Rock and Roll but with cool contemporary production and clean but choppy, punchy instrumental play.

From Bristol, new music capital of the English Western Counties, comes a new band called [State](#), fronted by **Sarah Andrieu** (Vocals) with **Ben Wilson** (Guitar), **Viv Paton** (Bass Guitar) and **Luke Ludwell** (Drums). Their single *Alive* is a fascinating hybrid of sounds. The semi-drone bass, dancing mainly around the tonal centre locked in with energetic drums provides an Eastern aspect which is reinforced by some inventive guitar and use of minor 6ths against the evolving colour and texture where the vocals have a gritty intensity and reinforce the strong melodic content. Refreshingly individual and punchily played and produced.

The intriguing [Matty Fenris](#) may have been the cause of the most different comparisons we have ever experienced from listeners to the radio show when we played *Cazadora*. This is a superbly written tale of escaping jail and execution in a 'deadwood town'

where the executioner is also the local priest! It mixes a choppy fuzztone guitar driven rockiness with elements of Folk and Americana. Among the comparisons offered by listeners were Sensational Alex Harvey Band, Nick Cave, Syd Barrett, Jacques Brel, Julian Cope and The Small Faces while I also heard the Thin Lizzy version of *Whiskey In The Jar* lurking in the shadows (before Lizzy transformed their sound and went much heavier). That is quite a checklist but mostly it shows how Matty has pulled influences from a multitude of sources to create his own sound that perfectly suits his story telling style.

The latest release by **Mayfield Records** through the exciting **Portsmouth Hub** project (supported by Arts Council England & The National Lottery UK) comes from another Portsmouth artist, [Jodie Vinall](#). *ADHD* is a fuzzed up rocking Indie track that provides a punchy, powerful, piledriving accompaniment to Jodie's gutsy, dexterous vocals. Plenty of clever drops and switches keep the momentum building with superb production from Sam and a hook that stays with you long after the track ends. Jodie is a vocal coach which is no surprise when you hear her sing. Another belting track from this amazing project, lighting a

different kind of fire on the English South Coast in an area marked out by the Arts Council as a *priority place*.

Although the information seems a little coy, I believe [Things We Built](#) are from Australia. Not sure why they would be reluctant to share that information. Anyway, they

have a single out called ***Daddy's Gone Disco***. A choppy guitar figure sits atop a solid rhythm section while the male vocal has an agreeable intensity but it's also the cool instrumental passages that really lift this and remind me of the great Welsh Psych Rock band Man at their best. This has a pop sensibility and a rock energy. Nice.



The latest single from Manchester's Post-Punk legends [The Chameleons](#) is brought to us by the awesome Gary Levermore at Red Sand PR. ***Saviours Are A Dangerous Thing*** is a bit more laid back and mystical sounding than their classic material but still has kaleidoscopic guitar jingling and jangling throughout as the rest of the band drive events forward. The vocal, sometimes harmonised, has a melancholy undercurrent and the minor key inflections lend the melody a darkness despite the bright overall sound and production. It builds in layers and seems to get better as it goes along. Great to have them with us after all these years.

Joe aka [Asgard Raven](#) brings his distinctive hybrid of Alt Rock, Blues and Americana on new single

Anything's Possible. It is in a slowish triplet time with beautifully played guitar parts panned and contrasting while the vocal has a touch of Richard Ashcroft about it and the harmonies are haunting and take us back to early West Coast Rock. It is also imaginatively constructed around extended chords, clever licks and an unusual, striking melody, enhanced by a smartly evolving arrangement and production.

Preston powerhouse indie quartet [Tuesday Night Whites](#) come to us courtesy of the ever-discerning Gary Hancock of Big G PR. New single ***Red Tree*** turns a dating experience into a good excuse for euphoric epic Alt Rock that is like Oasis in a mash with Fontaines D.C. while Kasabian add chops. Singer Ollie has a great ability to soar up

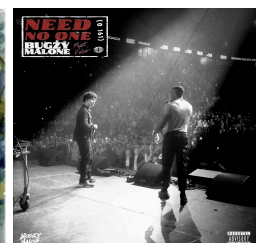
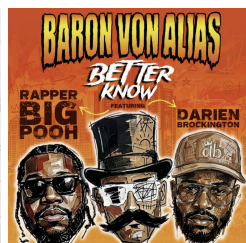
an octave to emphasise the heroic character of the chorus and the band provide him with the ideal backdrop of fuzzy but melodic and chopping guitar over driving bass and drums, all demonstrating the fluidity and chemistry they achieve. Top tune.

Courtesy of the awesome Lee Jackson at Wall Of Sound PR, Brighton's [Winter Gardens](#) return with **Adored**. This has a dark, slightly mystical atmosphere with punchy drums, driving bass, swirling synths and fuzztone guitar jangle accompanying ethereal female vocals; Imagine maybe The Cure in a mash with Effervescence or something like that. The song has a great final section with explosive drumming and synth in the ascendancy plus some spoken word. It's a great ending to a cool track.

TTD royalty and friend **Nick Woodgate** aka [The Jojo Man](#)

[Band](#) has responded to popular request, quite literally after an exchange of posts on the live thread for our radio show, by re-releasing his glorious cover of the Charles Aznavour classic **She**. It is not every day that I unequivocally declare a cover to be the best version I have ever heard of a great song but Nick's interpretation is just goose-bumping. The piano chords and guitar by Nick's long-standing ally **Tim Maples**, underpinned by Nick himself on Bass Guitar and **Alex 'Accy' Yeats'** perfectly solid drumming all inform this but the icing on the cake is Nick's loving and respectful vocal, the gorgeous close multiple harmonies and the way he controls the dynamics before bringing it down to a quiet finish. If you are going to cover a well-known song this is exactly how you should do it.

BEATS, RHYTHMS & RHYMES



Two very good friends of TTD (and both fellow Fresh on the Net moderators) **Del Owusu** aka [Platinum Mind](#) and [NX Panther](#)

have teamed up for the single **Tell Me** on Panther's **Tava Records** label. We tend to associate Panther with rap because Hip Hop has been

her trademark style but she is increasingly emerging as a soulful, accomplished singer and nowhere is that more true than here. Her harmonised vocals over Del's warm keyboard chords and an unusual beat set the scene before her highly rhythmic rap kicks in. The contrast between the lyrical flow of the verses and an extended melodic hook works really well and Del's instrumental arrangement, enhanced by Bass Guitarist **Ikechukwu Onwuagbo**, is understated and thoughtful, creating a dreamy atmosphere that contrasts the sharpness of the beat. Mastered by the amazing **Mark L Beazley** (Trace Recordings), aka Rothko, this is superb in all areas. Out everywhere on 11th September.

Long-time readers (and listeners to the radio show) may recall Psimitar. While they are sadly no more, their main man and producer **Steesh** is busy releasing music under his solo alias [Baron Von Alias](#) and, unusually, he has released two tracks at the same time. ***Run It Up*** sees him collaborating with Detroit lyricists **Elzhi** and **Guilty Simpson** plus the platinum-voiced **Keisha Shontelle**. The result is a clever combination of Old Skool vibes with a busy crossover of contrasting voices, a swinging beat and cool hook while the bassline and sounds are highly

contemporary and the production is spacious and helps the track feel big and colourful.

Better Know is a collaboration with the rapper **Big Pooh** and singer **Darien Brockington**. It begins with what sounds like a sample from an old Soul track but that might just be a clever configuration. Either way, Big Pooh's stream-of-consciousness rap sets the scene over lush chords and busy piano before Daren Brockington's soulful mid-range vocals deliver the hook and then expand into double-tracked melody. As the track develops, the rapping, with Baron Von Alias now at the forefront, is mixed with cool vocal harmonies. This is a lovely track.

[Florian And The Better Hand](#) bring what they refer to as an Alt Hip Hop/Boom Bap track entitled ***Wheel Back***. It kicks off with an appealing instrumental backdrop built around a IV - VIm - I - V chord sequence that is presented in different configurations in terms of synths and other timbres while the beat is mid-tempo and steady. The vocals are more sung than rapped but the feel is definitely Hip Hop. An intelligent observational lyric is adorned with squeals and shouts in the background too, all adding to the upbeat aura. A breath of fresh air.

Brought to us by the amazing Olivia Neil-Trenchfield at Plugged In PR, [Bugzy Malone](#) teams up with [VICI](#) on ***Need No-One***. This has a bouncing House-type groove laced with a Grime undercurrent and a late summer vibe as VICI's

voice interacts with Bugzy and the tune is reinforced by a dreamy female vocal melody that wraps itself around the mix, backed by some swirling synth figures to boot. Uplifting and fun.

SOULFUL SENSIBILITIES



The next release (11th September) from **Mayfield Records** and our joint **Portsmouth Hub** [Arts Council England & The National Lottery UK supported] project comes from the [Mayfield Records' House Band](#). I have mentioned in previous reviews how much I love the fact that **Dom Elton**, who has been a mod for all the decades that we have been friends and previously in his school days, was able to set up a label in the post-millennial period and still have a top quality House band in the tradition of the great Soul labels like Atlantic/Stax and Tamla Motown. I have also had the privilege of recording with them in the past. Now based in the new Mayfield Studios in the Fratton area of Portsmouth City Centre, they bring us ***Fear Of Ordinary***. The last single they appeared on

was essentially a solo one by [Mary Red](#) released only weeks ago. This one is, in essence, *their* single on which she features as the vocalist.

This has some classic Dom Elton features including his beautiful, nimble piano playing with gorgeous extended chords and call and response configurations with the cinematic strings in different octaves. It all has an aura of a classic sixties movie ballad that feels timeless. Mary Red's vocals are goose-bumping, dynamic and dexterous but controlled in a rich alto spectrum that is so perfect for the song. It offers a clever lyric that has its twists which you should listen to rather than have us try to explain them. And, of course, it is lovingly produced by Sam. Total quality and an inspired ending.

Brought to us by the amazing Angie Lemon of Angie Lemon PR, from Guinea (via the USA) comes former member of the groundbreaking West African band Ideal Black Girls (IBG), singer-songwriter and guitarist [Natu Camara](#) with *Djiwo*. It is described as Afro-Funk and there are some lovely African elements; not least her semi-chanted hooks bathed in rich harmonies. It also

has a timeless Soul-Funk quality with funky guitar triads and picked notes on the upper strings while the bass is locked in a tight groove with the drums and everything else plays around those foundations. Natu's voice is distinct and compelling and the track oozes joy and optimism despite its warning cry to young women in the face of the challenging journey into adulthood.

CLUB CULTURE



Complete with one of the most striking single covers of the month, TTD regular and good friend [Pimlican](#) is in a banging groove on *Some Love*. The beat is relentless and beautifully produced while the vocal elements, including his own, are stretched every which way over typically funk-laden chords and plenty of little touches that flutter and fly around the main themes. An absolute floor filla and one that you can also enjoy listening to in any context. The link here is for Beatport as that is, for EDM artists like Pimlican, the equivalent of

Bandcamp for indie bands. You will find it on most platforms too.

And it's two from [Pimlican](#) who also seems to be competing for bright coloured cover of the month! *Love Button* has a full-on Old Skool beat and repeating bassline in semi-tones while he uses various elements of his own voice to provide the vocal loops and whispers and we get some classic House effects and build-ups plus corresponding breaks. Another highly listenable floor filla.

SINGER-SONGWriters



Brought to us by the excellent Ed Townend of Elt Music UK, Welsh singer-songwriter [Freyja Elsy](#) is a familiar name to readers of this journal and listeners to the Trust The Doc Radio Show. Why? Because, as well as being very likeable, Freyja is an outstanding talent as new single ***Another Life*** demonstrates. This is quite unlike her last single *In My Veins* which was rightly a big hit with our listeners. *Another Life* utilises warm guitar chords and melodic figures. The vocals ride in with lush harmonies a la Staves meets Roches while I See Rivers bring sauces. The lyrics are reflective and a little rueful but the feel of the track is dreamy and cinematic, emphasised by the growing role of the strings. The change into the instrumental section is clever and contrasting and the Welsh language lyric that ensues is utterly goose-bumping. Once again, this is just outstanding in every area of its being. Freyja has been picking up the plaudits from various media. She deserves to see significant success soon.

The Newcastle-Upon-Tyne based singer-songwriter and TTD regular [Simon Taylor](#) has a new single out called ***I Smell A Rat***. This is jazzier than some of Simon's recent material although the one word at a time delivery lends it a semi-conservational style set against syncopated rhythms driven by lively but light textured drums with busy bassline and extended piano chords. It all has a late night city backstreets vibe and a hint of classic cop show about it that draws you in piece by piece.

TTD regular [Willie Dowling](#) returns with ***Rats In A Maze***, brought to us by the discerning Monika Agorelius at Close-Up PR. This is classic Willie Dowling with a driving 70s-style piano figure at the heart of the track. The melody has shades of ELO's *Don't Let Me Down* although, at the risk of upsetting Jeff Lynne stalwarts, this is arguably a better song (and we love ELO by the way). The tracking on the vocals is very effective and there is a contemporary freshness about the sounds and production despite its obvious retro intentions. Intelligent lyrics attacking far right thinking

set to characteristically sophisticated and smart chord extensions and harmonies remind us of his effortless ability to leave less accomplished purveyors of similar influences in his wake.

US legend **Joan Wasser** aka [Joan As Police Woman](#) is once again brought to us by the amazing Shauna McLarnon at Shameless PR. This time she is showcasing her ***Real Life Evolution*** album (20 years on from the original ***Real Life***) with a brand new reworking of the hit single ***Christobel***. This new interpretation is in a mind-spinning 5:8 time signature built around what the PR blurb calls ‘a minimal piano ostinato’, lending it both a semi [contemporary] classical edge and a subtle jazz undercurrent. Joan’s vocals are characteristically

earthy and dynamic and the whole vibe is fresh and a great way to breathe new life into one of her most well-loved classics.

Our super talented **Monochrome Motif Records** friend and label mate [John Serrano](#) teams up with Mexican singer [Zurdeik](#) on a new single called ***Garden Of Sin***. It kicks off with soft staccato acoustic guitar and John’s instantly recognisable voice setting the scene but it soon blossoms into a journey through rich chords and instrumentation, striking contrast between John’s middle register vocals and Zurdeik’s Mezzo range response. They complement each other so well and the twists and turns bring us some sumptuous modulations and goose bumping themes. This is just gorgeous.

SYNTHEMATIC



The latest single from TTD friend and regular Mark Heffernan aka [Pocket Lint](#)’s recently released album ***Wunderkammer***, which was reviewed in Ed. 117, is ***Nyx***. A single piano chord and bobbing synth tone introduces this track which sits on each chord for at least a bar at a time while Mark’s vocal is Phil

Oakey-ish in the verse but offers something deeper and croonier in the chorus while cinematic synth strings and harmonies add to the song’s rich slightly dark aura. Shades of Colin Vearncombe (Black) too. A real aural treat.

Retrosynth Records' **Eric C Powell** brings us three of the reviewed tracks in this month's *Synthematic* section. [Andrew Corbin](#) has a new single called **Breakdown**. A bassy synth riff drives this uptempo track with a straight ahead beat and a ghostly synth riff that plays against the vocal. The vocal is semi-falsetto which is very impactful and adds to a strong melody, lending it a distinctiveness that is the icing on the cake.

Also on Retrosynth Records, we have [AEU](#) aka **Dom Cresswell** with **Vitalise**. This is a slowish instrumental that switches between a laid back groove with swishing beat and major key melody and stabbing chords with theme played in open fourths. It could easily be the music for some kind of ambient backdrop, developing through phases of activity but retaining the same core centre.

We (Neil and Sherry) were just watching the Fleetwood Mac *Rumours* documentary in Sherry's flat the other day and, lo and

behold, here comes another Retrosynth Records act [Oceanside 85 x Jessy Mach](#) with a synthpop cover of **Dreams**. Chugging synth riff and straight beat accompany sweeps of synth chords and a female vocal not dissimilar to the Stevie Nicks rendition although that is where the similarity ends. The breaks and additional sounds take this off in its own direction. Importantly, it works though.

Brought to us by the wonderful Shauna McLarnon at Shameless PR, Dublin-Belfast act [Tiny Magnetic Pets](#) have an EP called **Astralaux** which includes two mixes of the track **Low Places** both by Dakeyne. The opener has a fast moving squelchy synth bass jumping around over persistent electro beat with little synth stabs and fluid sounds accompanying a female voice that delivers a strong melody interspersed with whispered words and loops. This drives relentlessly on with a sharp eye on the dancefloor as well as being a good radio track.

ELECTRONIC & AMBIENT



Ever reliable Gary Levemore of Red Sand PR gets involved with a lot of intriguing industrial-type artists and the latest is [KMDFM](#) from Los Angeles, led by studio owner and production wizard **Matia Simovich** whose long career has involved collaborations with members of Tangerine Dream, Nitzer Ebb and others. **Enemy** is built around a drone-like staccato synth figure, big resonant electronic beat and a descending chromatic synth riff. The male vocal is hard-edged and passionate with echoes of Portion Control and Cabaret Voltaire amongst others. It is oddly catchy too and punchily produced.

Also brought by Gary is classically trained violist and composer [Sophie Sirota](#) with the **4 Hero** remix of a track called **Mood**. The track offers seven minutes in which it begins with a gentle Viola melody playing in its rich alto range over extended chords and a chilled but crisp beat before it suddenly switches into a Drum'n'Bass exploration with extended piano chords and other sounds floating in and out before

the viola again introduces the original main theme. Towards the end, the beat drops out and sweep chords ride across the mix leading to one final sustained chord. It is an engaging, imaginative piece and well worth hearing.

TTD friend and regular **Clive Newlands** returns to his more familiar moniker as [The Fantom Man](#) on **Different** which, on the one hand, has a quite cinematic and documentary-like feel with its arpeggio-based piano figure and sounds swishing about against percussion that drops in and out. Then there are some enigmatic whole-tone scales that only appear momentarily but add intrigue to a pleasant instrumental piece with plenty of colour and contrast.

Recommended by the excellent Australian new music platform [Limelight](#), the Gold Coast, Australia(n) composer [Jim Ottaway](#) has a track called **Strange Paradox** taken from his album **Treasures Of Light**. It builds from sparse beginnings around an octave jumping synth figure and

some striking electronic percussion hits. The central pattern in open fifths remains throughout while staccato melodies and other figures and sounds dance around the mix. In some ways it reminds us of past Prog-Jazz experimenters

like Jean-Luc Ponty and classic electronic artists like Vangelis and Jean-Michel Jarre but it is much more consciously contemporary and its hypnotic style will keep you listening.

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL & SOUND ART



Big thanks [Classical Music News](#) for flagging up some great new releases this month. Likewise Australian journal [Limelight](#) who have also provided much of the inspiration for this month's section. Thanks both. See also the **Albums & EPs** section for the review of **Robyn Jacobs's** extraordinary new work.

US composer Catherine [Ketty Nez](#) has worked with [Trio Perruches](#) on a recording of her extended 5-movement work ***Only The Path Remains*** which channels influences from her family roots in Slovenia, Croatia, Romania and North Macedonia into a highly modern style. A lot of the music sees complex and extended harmonic language represented by choppy, evocative strings and Ketty Nez herself adding fluid, dynamically diverse piano. The final movement

seems to almost resolve into a gentler modal language, almost as if the more volatile paths and waters have been navigated. This is a very brief description, though, of a highly involved and superbly composed work by an imaginative and refreshingly contemporary composer.

Staying with US composers and trios, [Joseph Summer](#) has also composed an extended work entitled ***Poems Of Devotion***. Performed by three musicians, **Radek Baborák** (Horn), **Josef Špaček** (Violin) and **Miroslav Sekera** (Piano), this is in six movements lasting 1 hour 6 minutes. The explorations of the timbres and textural possibilities of the instruments is intriguing. But what is most captivating about this work is the beautiful, often ethereal harmonic language that has

echoes of Debussy, Messiaen and Dutilleux (and probably a host of others) and so delicately manages the potential clash of sounds and volumes between three such different instruments, sometimes by separation, other times by a subtle spaciousness and an evolving rhythmic diversity that, at times, is almost ametric. The music never ceases to be beautiful and impressionistic and the skill with which both composer and instrumentalists bring out the harmonic explorations, contrasts of timbre, texture and dynamic and such a wealth of heartwarming thematic material is breathtaking. I will be listening to this for a long time to come.

49 year old Brazilian composer [André Mehmarí](#) has two new compositions included on the album *Diorama Brasil* by [Heidi Louise Williams](#) and [Ney Fialkow](#). Both are composed for piano played by four hands. *Danses Aso Pares I* has a first movement that evokes the kind of South American dance traditions that once inspired Darius Milhaud in his Brazil-based years. Mehmarí does not attempt to represent them in polytonal harmony as Milhaud once did but his language is extended and goes well beyond the confines of the diatonic, bringing together an innate dynamism and playfulness with subtle explorations and some

rich dissonances. The second movement is slower and more mellow but still finds room for rich harmonic extensions and deftly organised counterpoint.

Danses Aso Pares II takes almost a mirror approach to its predecessor with a more laid back opening movement in which there are some jazz-inflected moments mixing in with a contemporary style while the second movement is lively, dominated by staccato chords, fluid melodic themes and mildly dissonant moments as well as a nod to the Brazilian jazz and folk traditions. Both pieces are well worth hearing and the playing by the two pianists is virtuosic, expressive and lovingly executed.

Veteran Iranian composer [Alireza Mashayekhi](#) has composed a volume of new solo flute music which has been recorded by American flautist [Kellariz Keshavarz](#). They are grouped under the title *Meditation-Tomorrow* and they vary in length between over sixteen minutes and just over two. Meditative as the title track may be, it includes some extended explorations of the flute's extremes both in terms of dynamics and its register. There are then seven parts of *Scheherezade's Memories* which offer a variety of contrasting material but still looking to test the

limits of the instrument while also evoking an Eastern aura with clever use of scalar material to imply harmony. The final piece is ***Circa*** which is sparse and spreads out the notes, pulling and pushing the flute in all directions. Kesharav's vibrato is beautiful and has a lingering quality and the performance is quite stunning.

American pianist-composer [Steve Hackman](#) is a highly versatile musician, a frequent guest conductor for various ensembles and yet also a songwriter and DJ. He has a new collection of his own solo piano works entitled ***Sacred Math***. The style is quite impressionistic and neo-romantic but that should not lead you to think there is any lack of adventure



Australian pianist and composer [Fiona Joy Hawkins](#) has an album out called ***Desert Of Crystal*** which is an alternative name for Antarctica. It also includes her lovely solo piano reworking of **Angelo Badalamenti's *Twin Peaks Theme*** under the title of ***Falling*** which was actually the vocalised version by **Julee Cruise**. FJH's own pieces tend to be built around delicate arpeggio-led figures that

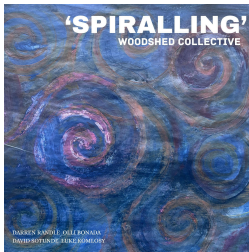
here. The opening piece is like a fantasia and, while it utilises diatonic arpeggios, it also veers into more impressionist territory. As the work develops, each piece has a distinct character, some almost jazz-infused, others quite classical and waltz-like. ***I Know That She Can Hear Me*** is particularly dynamic and has an emotional intensity while the final piece ***Old Liars Who All Their Lives Have Played The Actor*** is my favourite, built on a persistent mid-register drone bass as the harmonic language develops and begins to become darker before almost exploding into a fantasia utilising the upper registers of the piano but still with that persistent drone that fades but never disappears until the piece itself is over.

utilise some subtly extended chords that ensure her harmonic language is more interesting than merely diatonic. She also has a penchant for crystalline upper register play and a stop-start slow-fast method that emphasises key themes. It is an engaging and lovingly crafted set of pieces and beautifully played.

Staying with Australia and another track recommended this month by the excellent [Limelight](#) is [Julius Schwing](#)'s *Full Forest*. It is essentially a Sound Art track in which the Tasmania-based improvising guitarist plays with some fascinating sonic features that have a musical basis but it is the textures he creates that are

important here, a relentless race with an implied triplet time as the same enigmatic tones rumble and repeat but subtle alterations to the sounds and dynamics achieve a strange intensity that feels compelling even in its repetitiveness.

JAZZ & INTERNATIONAL JOURNEYS



The latest offering from Manchester's [Woodshed Collective](#) is *Spiralling*. Not only is this another example of their top-notch musicianship and virtuosic playing but also of their creativity and willingness to push the envelope in the use of unconventional harmony, contrasting rhythmic configurations and moments of solo improv. Dreamy keyboard

chords, walking bass, fluid drums and sumptuous sax are all features of this track as are the extended harmonic language and the various moments where events go off at tangents or simply sit back for a while, awaiting the next explosion of joyful playing. This is such a high standard but without a hint of indulgence.

FOLK & COUNTRY FARE



Irish singer-songwriter [Emma Doherty](#) comes to us via the

experienced and hard working Danny Watson of Danny Watson

Radio. ***The Statue*** is constructed around delicate picking acoustic guitar and Emma's voice which, unexpectedly, has echoes of Clari Freeman-Taylor in a mash with Ward Thomas although, stylistically, it has little in common with either. When the drums and other instruments come in, the texture thickens and the dynamics rise but the return to just guitar and voice is a lovely touch and, throughout, it is her yearning expressive voice and innate melodic sensibility that keeps us hooked.

From Sheffield come [Visual Language](#), described as a Dream Pop/Indie Folk band and that seems right for the single ***Old Photographs Lost By The Shore***. It is gentle and semi-acoustic in a slow tempo with dreamy male vocals and two guitars, one strummed and one adding a subtle melodic figure before floating synths bring additional colour. Later harmonies further add to the richness and mystique. This is the brainchild of **Andy Walker** and looks to be a project worth keeping on our radar



PART THREE: OTHER COMMENTARIES

MUSIC GROWTH PACKAGE LAUNCHES EARLY

Neil investigates

Last month we reported that the government's new **Music Growth Package**, launched as Arts Council England closes the *Supporting Grassroots Music Fund*, would be going live in October with information and guidance issued in September. So I was quite surprised to discover, in late August, that it has already opened and the application form is on Grantium looking ominously similar to the Supporting Grassroots Music application form, also suggesting the Arts Council are just as much in control as before despite the language used to describe their role in previous news about the scheme.

So, as I write, I have just started work on my first ever application to this new fund. According to the [Gov.UK](https://www.gov.uk) web site, funding worth £45 million has been put into the package over three years and it will fund over 2000 projects during that period. If you are unfamiliar with the economics of grant funding, that may sound quite generous but it is a fraction of the amount that was cut from Arts Council funding by the previous government when Boris Johnson was still in charge in 2022 [an eye

watering four Prime Ministers ago!].

As previously reported, it is supposed to be divided between those applying as organisations and those applying as individuals but, initially, when I ticked the box to say I was applying as an individual, I failed the eligibility criteria because, apparently, I can only apply as an organisation or as a sole trader. So far so exactly the same as the Supporting Grassroots Music Fund application process! Is this a new scheme or a cynical rebrand? And, looking at the format and the visuals, not even a proper rebrand!

A glance at each section of the form confirms my worst fears. Apart from reintroducing the unpopular section about what you are doing to help the environment, originally removed a few years ago, and getting rid of the section on managing risk, everything else is ominously similar to or the same as before.

So will there be any change in the make-up and style of the panels who make the decisions? And will the feedback be as appalling and

incompetent as it has been since 2022? I see no evidence that this represents even the smallest attempt to modernise the tired, discredited culture of the Arts Council. It looks like the same *Control and Command* nonsense that was so heavily criticised in Baroness Hodge's report in November. Are they even capable of change when they have spent so long in denial about their shortcomings and doing everything within their power to resist change?

It may be November's edition before I am able to report on

whether there is any notable change to the assessment and feedback. Of course, I will soldier on and get applications written for myself and other projects I have a role in.

Then we will have to sit tight and await the outcome to see whether this is just the repackaging of the same cynical protectionist culture as before or a genuinely new, improved funding regime. Here's hoping.

 Introduction

 **Applicant details**

 Address information

 Your initiative

 Your initiative cont.

 People, reach and inclusion

 Location

 Initiative timeline

 Who you are working with

 Environmental responsibility

 Budget

 Budget - Income

 Budget - Expenditure

 Monitoring information

 Declaration

Applicant details

Applicant name:

Applicant number:

Applicant type:

 **What name is your bank account registered in?**

 **Main art form:**

 **Are you based within England or the wider United Kingdom?**

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THE ART OF COLLABORATION - Talented Teenage Artist Mia Wilks talks about some of the great collaborations



I have always been interested in music collaborations. When I began my music career six years ago, I collaborated on several songs in the USA with DKTG, and a dance track in Argentina with

Music Producer Claudio Malz. They all gave me a chance when I was just starting out in music.

I think this was a learning curve, not just because the collaboration

was remote, but because creatively it introduced me to rhythms, cords, melodies, and production techniques that I wouldn't normally use. As an Independent musician I think this is especially useful. With finances tight, you can't always be in a studio, and a collab allows you to learn from others, tap into a new audience and create something that is unique. I think it's important to share ideas in music, and it's a great way to see your own music in a different perspective.

It's about supporting other musicians which creates a sense of community. This can sometimes be lacking in the music industry when competitive gain overshadows what is important.

Ultimately, I think a collab project creates trust and connections far beyond the song; it's about relationship building and creativity. I have looked back over decades to collate my list of 'Top 10' best collab songs.

Kaytranada Ft. H.E.R - 'Intimidated'

The track was released on November 19, 2021.

I have been a fan of Kaytranada for years, and this track is one of my favourites. I love the blend of Kaytranada's House style

production with H.E.R's soulful vocals. It's one of those collabs that will remain timeless.

I love the lyrics which are about not wasting time and going after something that you feel is right.

Time

Don't wanna waste the feel (feel)

Like we could make it real (real)

Don't run away when you could be lovin' me

Signs (signs), too busy reading minds (minds)

Already made it here (here)

Don't overthink when you could be lovin' me



Tyler, the creator and Doechii - 'Balloon'

Doechii is featured on this track taken from Tyler, the creator's 2024 studio album Chromakopia.

This is a great track, but I think it shows collaboration and artist support at its best. Tyler, the creator has publicly praised Doechii for her 'style and artistry, and how much her songs resonated with him'

It is a hugely successful song, marking Doechii's second appearance on the Hot 100 Chart.

It also features vocals from Daniel Caesar and Bonita Smith.

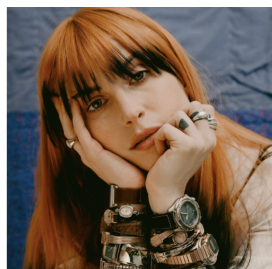
Coolio Ft. L.V. - 'Gangsta's Paradise'

This track was released in August 1995 by Warner records. It credits Stevie Wonder with lyrics and music taken from his track 'Pastime Paradise'. It's the first ever rap song to go straight to number one in Britain.

It's also featured in the film Dangerous Minds with Michelle Pfeiffer.

The track begins with a line from Psalm 23:4

This has to be one of the best collabs of all time. I love the story telling and rhythm, and the vocals create contrast and dynamics. It's one of those tracks that's so distinctive, not just because the beginning is dramatic but because the collab creates a vision. You can actually see the story unfold.



B.o.B Ft. Paramore's Hayley Williams - 'Airplanes'

Another collab where rap and vocals meet. This track was released in April 2010, taken from B.o.B's studio album 'The Adventures of Bobby Ray'

I love the story behind this track. B.o.B and Williams never ever met! The track was created remotely and also the music video. The first time they met was for a live performance of the song at the 2010 MTV music awards!

Arianna Grande and Lady Gaga - 'Rain on me'

It's not just the song that makes this collab iconic, it's the music video. Released in May 2020 the song won a Grammy, but also three MTV Video music awards.

It's an upbeat dance pop song which features their distinctive vocals and a synth beat and funk guitars.

The artists came together to create this song which talks about enduring intense public scrutiny. This song resonates with me as it talks about resilience and determination; a subject that I naturally write about.

It's a strong collaboration about women in music coming together.



Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell - 'Ain't no mountain high enough'

This song is interesting because it was a success twice! First in 1967 recorded by Marvin Gaye and Tami Terrell, and later by Diana Ross.

The collaboration works because of their contrasting vocals which really complement each other and creates a story, like two people talking to each other. This track was created without the Artists being in the same room. Terrell recorded her vocals first and Gaye 'overdubbing his voice to wrap around hers' but the overall effect feels like they were in the same room using the same microphone. This track is timeless Motown backed by the Funk Brothers.

Basement Jaxx and Lisa Kekaula - 'Good Luck'

This collaboration duo took over the dance scene in the 2000's creating some of the biggest dance hits of the era. I love the combination of Lisa's rock vocals combined with the House/ Garage style of Basement Jaxx. You just

wouldn't expect this to work but it created an iconic distinctive sound.

I think this shows how a collaboration can push boundaries creatively. For the listener it created something new and exciting. Something you'd never heard before.

It's these types of collabs that literally shape the sound of an era.

Sam Smith and Disclosure - 'Latch'

Very often a dance track introduces an Artist to the world. This track from 2012 did just that for Sam Smith. At the time he was a total unknown working shifts at a bar to support his music career. The collab worked so well - you can hear the chemistry between Sam Smith's soulful vocals and Disclosure's distinctive UK Garage sound.

Smith was introduced to Disclosure by mutual friend Jimmy Napes. They wrote 'Latch' in one studio session which shows how some collabs are just destined to be.

Raye and D-Block Europe - 'Prada'

These guys teamed up with British Producer Cassõ. It went viral

across the UK and Europe catapulting Raye into the spotlight. In early 2023 a 20-year-old music producer Cassõ was learning how to make beats in his bedroom. He heard Raye's vocal tones on 'Ferrari Horses' and created a high energy dance beat around it. This was an unofficial remix which exploded overnight on TikTok.

He subsequently had to clear the sample. The song was renamed 'Prada' and the rest is history!

Michael Jackson and Paul McCartney - 'The girl is mine'

Perhaps one of the most iconic collaborations of all time. This song was written by Michael Jackson. It

works so well as it's written like a conversation between two guys who fall for the same woman.

It works because of their contrasting vocal styles; Jackson's R&B pop vibe and McCartney's classic pop style.

Released in 1982 as the first single from Michael Jackson's historic 'Thriller' album.

I think some collabs are so powerful they become timeless and iconic. This is one of them.

'The girl is mine' achieved number one in the US Hot Chart and certified platinum in the US, achieving over one million sales.



My Global Talent Visa Journey: Two Attempts That Taught Me What Actually Matters by Sherry

Before I explain the Global Talent Visa criteria, I want to be honest about something. I didn't get it right the first time. In fact, I applied twice before I eventually received a positive outcome. Those two unsuccessful attempts taught me something that I don't think you fully understand until you have actually gone through the process.

Having achievements is not the same as presenting those achievements in a way that meets the endorsement criteria. When I first started looking into Global Talent, I was thinking about my career from an artist's perspective. I was looking at everything I had done, my music, releases, performances, education, collaborations, press, audience and other professional experiences and thinking "Surely this should be enough?" But that isn't really how the assessment works. The endorsing body isn't simply looking at whether you are a good artist. They are looking at whether the evidence you provide demonstrates the specific requirements for the route you are applying under. And that distinction made a huge difference to my application.

What went wrong in my first attempts?

My first two applications helped me understand that I was approaching the process from the wrong angle. I was essentially asking "How can I prove that I'm talented?" But I should have been asking "How does my evidence demonstrate the specific criteria for Exceptional Talent or Exceptional Promise?" Those are two very different questions.

An artist can have an impressive CV and still submit evidence that doesn't properly answer what the endorsing body is looking for. You might have performed at great venues, You might have released music, have worked with talented people, received press and even have won awards. But if the evidence isn't clearly connected to the criteria, the assessor may not be able to give that evidence the weight you expect it to have. And that's something I learned the hard way.

I stopped trying to prove everything

For my later application, I changed my approach. Instead of thinking "Let me show them everything I have ever done." I started thinking "What are the strongest pieces of

evidence that actually answer the criteria?" That completely changed the way I looked at my career. I started separating my achievements into different categories. What demonstrates recognition? What demonstrates international activity? What demonstrates the quality of my work? What demonstrates my progression? What demonstrates my potential? What demonstrates my contribution to the UK creative industry? And most importantly, Which documents actually prove those things? That became much more important than simply having a long CV.

Your evidence needs to tell a story

This is probably the biggest lesson I took from the process. Imagine someone who has released ten songs. That's an achievement. But imagine those ten songs alongside:

- professional releases
- recognised media coverage
- radio airplay
- performances at professional venues
- international activity
- industry collaborations
- measurable audience engagement
- awards or nominations
- a clear progression in their career

Suddenly, you're not just looking at ten songs. You're looking at a

developing professional career. That is the kind of distinction artists need to understand. The goal isn't to make the assessor think "Wow, this person has done a lot." The goal is for the evidence to make the assessor understand "This person meets the criteria and has a credible career trajectory in their field."

My two unsuccessful attempts were actually valuable

Looking back, I don't see those two attempts as wasted. They forced me to understand the process properly. They made me look critically at my own career and ask questions I probably wouldn't have asked otherwise.

- What counts as meaningful recognition?
- What makes evidence strong?
- What is actually relevant?
- What is simply impressive but not useful for this particular application?
- How do I demonstrate my potential rather than just listing my achievements?
- And how do I make sure every piece of evidence has a reason for being there?

After two unsuccessful attempts, I finally approached the application with a much clearer understanding of what I was trying to demonstrate and with some help

from people who have managed to get the application right. And that application was successful. Sometimes the difference isn't that you suddenly became more talented. Sometimes the difference is that you finally understand how your existing career needs to be evidenced against the criteria.

I am sharing my personal experience because I think artists should hear from people who have actually gone through the process.

My experience isn't a guarantee that someone else will receive endorsement, and every application is assessed on its own evidence and circumstances. The rules can also change. So use personal experiences like mine as a starting point for understanding the process, but always check the current official requirements for your specific discipline before applying.

ONE NIGHT IN AYLESBURY: REVISITING THE RAVISHING BEAUTIES by Neil



It was on a winter night in 1982 (January 25th to be precise) that I discovered a band whose music I would keep coming back to even though they never actually released a single track in their



short career. I am talking about **The Ravishing Beauties**. They have all gone on to have impressive careers but the band has never so much as had a retrospective EP put out in any

format. So how did I stumble upon this unique trio and their music?

The band we had bought tickets to see was The Teardrop Explodes. Less than a year earlier, after their brilliant but seldom mentioned session on the Richard Skinner Show on BBC Radio 1 (which used to precede John Peel's show back in pre-digital times when all forms of pop music had to be accommodated on one station), the Teardrops were competing to be my favourite band. I had fallen in love with their music at the beginning of 1980 with a series of singles and the original *Kilimanjaro* album (before their label started adding extra tracks). After the high of *Reward* and that R1 session, the second album *Wilder* had been a bitter disappointment; poorly, plastically produced and patchy in terms of the quality of material. So I was hoping the gig might restore my faith.

We were always fascinated to see who the support acts were at gigs like this and it was not unusual for them to be artists we were not familiar with. When we saw the name The Ravishing Beauties, we obviously expected some form of irony but, as we discussed this on the way to the Friars Club in the Maxwell Hall, Aylesbury Civic Centre (by far our favourite venue in those days), my friends and I

concluded that it would be a bunch of awkward looking guys or something along those lines.

We certainly were not expecting three awesome young women with serious instrumental chops playing dreamy ambient synthwave with the addition of flute, oboe and cor anglais. Nor did we anticipate an imaginative incorporation of classical influences that was a million miles from the 'symphonic rock' of Prog. Yes, the name *was* meant ironically. In fact it was supposed to be The *Raving* Beauties but Bill Drummond (yes, he of KLF/JAMM fame), the Teardrops' manager, misheard the name and the mistake that ended up on posters sort of stuck! It *was* a light-hearted dig at the sexualisation of female artists but the band were also keen not to be pigeon-holed and that included not wanting to be labelled as feminists [or at least not as a *feminist band*] either.

When I have read what articles and interviews exist on the internet, the trio have referred to chaos on stage between the tracks and suggested there was a lack of polish to their performances. I only saw them once so cannot comment with authority but that was not my experience. I can still clearly picture them in matching dresses, each with a keyboard and a mic

while a giant reel to reel tape recorder played backing tracks behind them. Their ethereal sound and rich harmonies filled the room and created a beautiful atmosphere I felt inclined to lose myself in. In short, I was blown away!

The Teardrop Explodes were a big disappointment that night. Julian Cope messed about, putting on silly voices and looking like he would rather not be there. Dave Balfe looked so bored that, at one point, I wasn't sure whether he had fallen asleep on his keyboard! Of course, I now know why and what was going on behind the scenes that led them to split not long afterwards. But, as we headed home to Hemel Hempstead [where I still lived at that time], all I could think about was The Ravishing Beauties and the seed they had planted in my head about how I might potentially present my own music.

Incidentally another fine musician friend of mine, Donald Ross Skinner who actually became Julian Cope's guitarist and main musical partner for a decade after the Teardrops split up, also saw them on that same tour. Like me, he was captivated by The Ravishing Beauties.

In the days ahead, the hunt was on to find something I could buy but,

when I started to dig, I discovered there were no Ravishing Beauties singles. The only available release was **Virginia Astley's *A Bao A Qu*** EP on Why-Fi Records (later the label of Jesus & Mary Chain), a 10 inch vinyl 4-song EP that included all three band members (**Virginia Astley, Kate St John & Nicky Holland**) playing some of the same tracks the band themselves performed (including on their John Peel Session in April 1982). It was a beautiful work whose highlight, for me, was their reworking of a song by **Mahler** about child death (which he experienced as a father) called ***We Will Meet Them Again***. When the full choir-style vocal harmonies come in late in a track that builds from warm but sparse beginnings, it is quite overwhelming and emotion shredding. But I loved all the tracks and played the EP repeatedly.

The Ravishing Beauties did record a session for the John Peel Show in April 1982. Despite being a fanatic listener, I somehow missed the show that night and only heard it decades later on [YouTube](#). I have subsequently discovered a couple of additional tracks including one that was on Virginia Astley's Facebook page.

Wind the clock forward and, in 2017, I was invited to perform on the BBC Introducing Stage at

Latitude as a solo artist. This followed several years of support from Late Junction (BBC Radio 3) and Freak Zone (BBC 6 Music) for my one and only solo album *Urban Art Music* (Demerara Records, 2014) and subsequent EPs, most notably [Music To Plan Towns By](#) which consolidated my use of pre-recorded environmental sounds I could derive pitch from and use not just for sound effects but for actual harmony, melody and textures alongside notated instruments. That had been a central element of my PhD study which, in turn, had led to the album.

I didn't want to be a solo artist though and had only been releasing solo material as a means to an end. So I formed the first line-up of [\[The\] Music Of Sound](#) to play the festival. Needless to say, my three current bandmates would still have been at school back then! I actually looked to two very long-time friends who, like me, had grown up in Dacorum Borough's classical music system [which I now realise was simply amazing] and had all ended up in London by the mid-eighties. John Molloy (ex-Mainframe) was a musician I had dreamed of playing in a band with when I was a kid because he was older than me and was in cool Prog bands! Mark Saxon played Cello in the same orchestras as me and we used to go to gigs together.

Mark recruited his sons Matt (Flute & Synth) and James (Piano) and the band was complete with John's partner Damon overseeing live production and me conducting! John took care of matching the pre-recorded elements with our live instrumentation.

What I realised, as we were rehearsing for the festival, was how much my music had finally been able to demonstrate the influence of The Ravishing Beauties. Even though our sound was more edgy; what Late Junction's lovely Max Reinhardt described several times as 'the combination of avantgarde tendencies and pop sensibilities', the dreamy textures, the use of woodwind and synth [and, in our case, Cello too] and the warm harmonic language in our less experimental [i.e. more modal, less atonal/ametrical] tracks all owed something to that original template even though, at that stage, we had no vocals on our tracks. It was the Latitude performance and the *Music To Plan Towns By* EP that brought me into contact with music [and broadcasting] legend **Tom Robinson**, another hero of my younger years, and six months later I was part of his [Fresh On The Net](#) team as a moderator and reviews writer. By 2019, I was also curator of the platform's first festival.

Wind the clock on to 2020 and there was a Saturday night in lockdown on which Tom played the opener from my ***Alternatives To Despair*** EP on the same BBC 6 Music show that he played a lovely track by former Ravishing Beauties [and Dream Academy] member **Kate St John** on. Kate, incidentally, also turned up in the video for a lovely song called *I Am The River* by my friend Tom Houston (on which she played piano) that featured on my online TV show *Upstream*.

Anyway, I posted on Twitter that I had been on the same show as Kate and mentioned how The Ravishing Beauties had blown The Teardrop Explodes off stage all those years ago. Kate shared my post with fellow former RBs member **Nicky Holland**. Kate and I also followed each other which I was very pleased about. But it was another two years before I contacted Kate and asked whether it would be okay to email her some questions about her time in The Ravishing Beauties whose influence on my evolving band had grown in importance as our sound had begun to change. This was the era of Florie Namir joining on piano and vocals and Aniya Sofia having her first period with the band as a very young (17 y.o.) flautist. Kate kindly agreed to answer some questions and reading her email

reply again four years later still warms my heart.

Kate is, by the way, an amazing musician. I remember once talking with Brian O'Neill, owner of Dimple Discs (who we were signed to from 2022 to 2024 before switching to Monochrome Motif Records and who has been a good friend since 2021), about The Ravishing Beauties. He remembered that, in his Rough Trade days, he was quite intimidated by Kate's beauty but very much admired her musicianship! She, of course, had gone on to be a key member of Dream Academy who had a major hit with *Life In A Northern Town*. She has since played with countless artists, including Van Morrison, Roger Eno, Laraaji and Bill Nelson, and, these days, she and her husband Neil MacColl are highly accomplished and sought-after composers of film and theatre music. In her email, she talks about a week writing, improvising and recording with Roger Eno, Laraaji and Bill Nelson (ex-Be Bop Deluxe & Red Noise) being possibly the most creative week of her life. She also explains that, while there was no specific agenda with The Ravishing Beauties, they loved the free reign they had to use what skills they possessed and, as Kate put it, '... to use the 100s of hours of oboe practice I'd done in something so creative'.

In one of the online snippets, Virginia Astley is quoted as saying the band got branded as mixing classical with pop and ‘... never really lived it down’. This is curious. For me, their ability to bring classical influences so successfully into what was thoroughly fresh and contemporary music was one of their outstanding qualities. Others had dabbled with the classical and ended up with either rank cheesiness or pomp (although, in a very different way, Yes’s *Close To The Edge* album is, in retrospect, a work of genius in this context). When the RBs sang in slightly choirgirl-like voices and harmonised over warm synths and goose-bumping woodwinds, it felt natural, new and so invigorating. In her email to me, Kate said she would love to have been able to sing like Nina Simone but had to ‘make do’ with the voice she had. I, for one, am so glad that she did.

I did discover very belatedly that there was a Ravishing Beauties track released on an NME Cassette Compilation. That track was [Futility](#). And, as mentioned earlier, there was a track on Virginia Astley’s Facebook page called **Hush Hush** although I cannot find it there now. Fortunately I do have an MP3 of it. Virginia Astley has also said the band were prevented from getting a record deal because

she was signed as a solo artist to Why Fi and the other two did not want to sign with them. But couldn’t the label have released the band’s music by having Virginia under contract and deploying the other two as freelancers? I suppose that is what they had already done, to a degree, with Astley’s *A Bao A Qu* EP the previous year.

As I mentioned earlier, all three members have had impressive careers. As well as Kate St John’s time with Dream Academy, Van Morrison and collaborations (Roger Eno, Laraaji, Bill Nelson etc.), Nicky Holland played a big part in Tears For Fears, especially on their *The Seeds Of Love* album and her name has popped up on so many recordings I have bought or seen over the years (including Cyndi Lauper, Funboy Three etc.). Virginia Astley continued on the solo artist path (although she did play for Prefab Sprout at one point) and carved out a successful career as a niche artist with a loyal following. Much of her solo work echoes what she had been doing with the RBs. Stuart Maconie (BBC 6 Music) is a big fan.

In 2026, I imagine most people would struggle to see an obvious influence of The Ravishing Beauties on [The] Music Of Sound but it is unquestionably there in some of the vocal parts, rich textures and

even the fact that, despite our evolution from postclassical industrial music to guitarless Dream Pop, the flute has always continued to be one of our signature sounds. Certainly Sherry (Sherin) and I have listened to the RBs and taken influence from their sound in how Sherry sings and how we arrange our harmonies. We are blessed to have the amazing Ellie on flute these days and now Aniya is back with us and adding a second vocal and keyboard that we really needed. It may not be obvious on surface level but the RBs' legacy is ever-present. Not least, we even use a backing track and have woodwind, keyboards and mainly female voices. That use of a live backing track was another of the ideas they first planted in my head and which Black added to when I saw them (in the days when they were a duo of Colin Vearncombe and David Dickie, who I had also seen fronting The Last Chant) in late 1982.

It is rare for us to focus on the past in this journal. But the way I keep

coming back to The Ravishing Beauties has been quite amazing and inspiring. These days I enjoy citing them as an influence in interviews with magazines, podcasts and blogs and waiting for the confused look or response! They are a band who more people should know about. 44 years ago, they inspired me to contemplate how I might want to rethink my own musical output and live set-up. It took a while but I got there in the end!

Maybe there will be a day when a label will decide to acquire the licenses to release and properly market a Ravishing Beauties retrospective. That would be a highly worthwhile project. In the meantime, I will continue to take every opportunity to introduce more people to their unique and fantastic music.

LEWISHAM NORTH CLP ROUNDTABLE ON ARTS & CREATIVE INDUSTRIES FUNDING - Neil reports

It is coming up to a year since my hard working Labour MP Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham North) held the inaugural roundtable meeting on arts and creative industries

funding at Trinity Laban. At the time, Vicky was running for election to the DCMS Select Committee in parliament. Shortly after the meeting, she was elected

to that committee. A year on, Vicky is seeking another round of consultation with relevant arts and creative practitioners in the constituency of which I am one.

The next meeting takes place in September so I will be able to provide a report in Ed 120. Last year I was the opening speaker at the event and I made a passionate case for increasing Arts Council budgets, talking about the potential for job creation, nurturing of talent, benefits to communities, platforms for the UK's upcoming artists, collaboration across disciplines, promotion of the most under-represented groups and the feelgood factor that comes from seeing exciting new projects springing up and helping to put money and support into the local economies. I ended by reminding everyone that, in my lifetime, every Labour Government had increased arts funding and every Conservative one had cut it and called on Vicky's administration not to be remembered for reversing that trend. At the end of the event, when summing up all the debates, her first point was that we needed more funding for the Arts Council.

This year I will be able to take a slightly different stance; praising the government for introducing the Music Growth Package and making some money available over the 3

year cycle (see my earlier article at the beginning of Part 3) but also warning that, firstly, this *must* come with a change in culture within the Arts Council and, if it doesn't, the current misery will continue. So Baroness Hodge's report needs to be read and understood and the Select Committee should demand change from the horrendous incompetence we have experienced recently both in how decisions are reached and how nakedly obvious it is, when reading the feedback, that the panels have either not read the applications thoroughly or lack the basic knowledge and skills to be competent to understand what they are dealing with.

Secondly, while the new package is a welcome step, £15 million a year is nowhere near the figure cut by the last administration and will only represent a sticky plaster approach to a deeply wounded relationship. Far more money is needed to achieve the last Prime Minister's pre-election pledge to restore our Creative Industries to being the best in the world.

It will certainly be a chance to gain some insight into what the current expectation is of a DCMS Select Committee member in terms of how far the new Burnham-led Cabinet is prepared to go to make funds available where they can

make a difference to people's lives. I know Vicky is genuine in her passion for supporting the arts and creative industries. We need to arm

AND FINALLY

So, despite Fresh on the Net being on its summer hiatus throughout August, we ended up with over 60 new releases to review. As mentioned earlier, it presented an opportunity to review [and play] more than usual of the tracks sent to us by plugging and PR folks and we also paid tribute to a number of those individuals who work tirelessly to get their clients' music in front of key media.

It was also a month in which our own band [\[The\] Music Of Sound](#) had our liveliest single launch, helped greatly by our decision to deploy the amazing Jade from Memphis Music to represent *Shimmer* to media people. It was a thrill to be selected for Behind The Music on RTE and to be interviewed by the lovely **Aaron Kavanagh** for the **Post-Burnout** podcast. See the links in Part 1.

GLOBAL TALENT VISA

The fantastic news about Sherry's global talent visa was relayed in the last edition but this one sees her article about the trials and tribulations of going through the application process three times before fully understanding what

her with strong arguments and evidence to take back the government. In the meantime, watch this space.

they required from her. So many of our foreign national friends who are involved in music in the UK are now looking at this as a potential way to be allowed to stay and continue their excellent work here.

It is sad that a Labour Government has not been prepared to face down the frankly ridiculous anti-immigration propaganda from the far right and make the case for why we should be making it easier for hard working migrants to remain in the UK where they are already making both a financial contribution and a creative one. But it is what it is and reading the article might help some artists to focus on what they need to do to satisfy the terms.

MUSIC GROWTH PACKAGE

It is tentatively good news that the government has committed £45 million over three years for the new Music Growth Package (which, in all but name, replaces Arts Council England's Supporting Grassroots Music fund). But actually £15 million a year is a fraction of what was cut from ACE's budget by the last [Tory] administration and, if Andy Burnham is serious about

wanting the UK to lead the world with its creative industries, there will have to be more investment in arts funding in the near future. A test run of the new application process reveals that it is almost identical to Supporting Grassroots Music. We have to hope that the way cases are assessed and the quality of the feedback will both be considerably better than the awful experience of SGM over the past few years.

LEWISHAM NORTH ROUNDTABLE

That brings us neatly to the subject of September's roundtable meeting hosted by Lewisham North's [Labour] MP Vicky Foxcroft, a year on from the one held in Trinity Laban at which Neil was the opening speaker. Neil will be speaking at this one too and will use the opportunity to welcome the Music Growth Package with the accompanying caveats but also to ask Vicky, who has succeeded in being elected to the DCMS Select Committee in the House of Commons since last year's event, to maintain pressure on the Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy and the government to ensure the launch of the Music Growth Package goes hand in hand with the implementation of the key recommendations from Baroness Hodge's report. That means the Arts Council needs to implement a marked shift in its culture away

from being an over-protective *Command And Control* organisation that refuses to accept criticism and is perpetually in denial and towards being the kind of nurturing, supportive body that Hodge recommended.

FRESH ON THE NET

Fresh on the Net reopens on 7th September and no doubt there will be a deluge of tracks in the first couple of weeks as there always is when we have been on a break. But what would be really good would be if all those same artists would come and vote every weekend and spread the word, encouraging support for the platform (although *not* on a weekend when they have a track at the Listening Post obviously!). This is a unique and supportive platform staffed on an entirely free, volunteer basis by a bunch of people playing different parts in the independent music sector so let's work together to build the audience and help all the artists to have maximum exposure and be on the radar of the industry and media too.

SEPTEMBER

We are entering the Autumn months after the horrendous heatwaves of the summer that have caused so many problems with droughts. For us, these months usually also represent a challenge in trying to secure more funding to

help us with projects that showcase grassroots music. So the Music Growth Package will be put to the test as we apply on our own behalf but also on behalf of projects that have been unfairly deprived of new money like Fresh on the Net Live and The Inclusion Zone as well as a second year of funding for The Portsmouth Hub. Fingers crossed that the new package will help us to deliver these key ventures.

On a separate note, September will also see the start of our next single campaign with the song ***Danger Danger*** scheduled for an early October release. We are super excited about this track, our most explicit attack on Farage and the far right (with a bit of Trump thrown in for good measure) to date. It will be good to give Jade the opportunity to build on the

successes with *Shimmer* and try to get us into some more media that we have never broken into before. And it will be fun brainstorming with Del and our bandmates over the video and how we make it clear what it is about while avoiding any potential libel or defamation cases!

THANK YOU

As ever, thank you so much for reading ***Trust The Doc***. This is actually the longest edition since the special 100th one and we are grateful to Mia Wilks for allowing us to publish her article. We hope that some of what we have included will be of interest and/or use. Have a great month ahead everyone and remember, as we always say, New Music Never Sleeps!

NEIL & SHERRY xxxx